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ABSTRACT

This report, one of two investigations into the use of public television and radio requested by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and prepared by their Office of Communication Research, provides an analysis and comparison of five selected public affairs programs. These programs include "The MacNeil/Lehrer Report," "USA: People and Politics," and "Wall Street Week" (all PBS productions), as well as "Meet the Press" (NBC), and "Sixty Minutes" (CBS). Data, gathered from the 1976 Roper Reports, were collected in order to determine the percentage of audience attributable to various demographic groups and to assess the viewing penetration of "reach" of each program. In summary, data show that public affairs programs, whether produced by public television or commercial networks, draw audiences of varied characteristics. (KS)

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THE ROPER SURVEYS: A CPB SPECIAL REPORT

REPORT #2

"THE TELEVISION AUDIENCE FOR SELECTED PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMS"

MacNEIL/LEHRER REPORT (PBS)
USA: PEOPLE AND POLITICS (PBS)
WALL STREET WEEK (PBS)
MEET THE PRESS (NBC)
SIXTY MINUTES (CBS)

Prepared
by

Office of Communication Research
CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING

January 1977

CS 501 601

Report #2 of the CPB special report series on the Roper Surveys contains an analysis and comparison of the television audiences for the following five selected public affairs programs.

MacNeil/Lehrer Report (PBS)

USA: People and Politics (PBS)

Wall Street Week (PBS)

Meet the Press (NBC)

Sixty Minutes (CBS)

During part of each of the 10 annual Roper Surveys, respondents are asked whether they have personally watched any of 12 pre-selected television programs during the past four weeks. The list of programs used in each survey is specified by CPB and contains an equal number of PBS and commercial network shows. The audience data included in this report (see attachments) are based on the findings of these television program viewing questions and have been compiled from the Roper Surveys conducted between December 1975 and October 1976 (Reports 76-1 to 76-9). During these dates, all of the public affairs programs examined here were included in a multiple number of Roper Surveys.

Composite viewing data were found for each program by combining the claimed viewing responses across all survey periods. Combining the responses in this manner increases the sample base and provides audience estimates which are more stable. Attachment #1 shows audience composition percentages for each of the major demographic categories reported in Roper reports. These data indicate the percentage of audience attributable to each demographic group. Attachment #2 contains estimates of viewing penetration. Penetration or "reach" was found by dividing the number of respondents who claimed viewing the program by the total number of respondents. The data were calculated by demographic group. An analysis of the attached data shows the television audiences for the selected public affairs programs are varied. Only USA: People and Politics and Meet the Press maintain similar audience characteristics in all demographic categories.

In order to simplify analysis of the data, program-by-program highlights of audience composition are presented below:

MacNeil/Lehrer Report: A nightly PBS 30 minute program which examines, in depth, a major news item of the day. The program, like WALL STREET, appeals primarily to a male audience. Audience age demographics, however, resemble those of 60 MINUTES with a high percentage of young adult viewers. The popularity of the program is pronounced in large markets. One-half of all viewers reside in the top 25 metropolitan areas. Like WALL STREET, it attracts a high composition percent of college educated and executive/professional viewers,

but differs from WALL STREET by showing a greater appeal to blue collar workers. Compared to the other four programs, it has a higher composition percent of Catholics and shows slightly higher percentages of Independent and politically liberal viewers.

USA: People and Politics: A weekly PBS 30 minute political magazine series designed to examine issues leading up to the November 1976 election. In most categories the characteristics of the audience for this program closely resemble those of MEET THE PRESS viewers. More than one-third of the audience is 60 years of age or older. The program which does not show any particular pattern of viewing by geography or market size, appeals equally to male and female viewers. Levels of education and employment are not as high as is the audience to MACNEIL/LEHRER or WALL STREET. In an overall comparison with the other four public affairs shows, the program's audience more closely approximates viewing to the commercial network programs than to the PTV programs.

Wall Street Week: A weekly PBS 30 minute program which features news analysis of economic interest. Of the five public affairs program audiences examined here, the audience to this show is the most distinct. The audience is predominantly male (66.7%) and like the MACNEIL/LEHRER program shows a high percentage of college educated and executive/professional viewers. The percentage of viewers that are Republican (32.7%) is significantly higher than for the other four shows. The program, which has the highest percent of "conservatives" within its audience also shows an appeal to "liberals" which account for 31.4% of the viewers. Compared with the other programs, this percent is second only to the percentage for MACNEIL/LEHRER (32.3%).

Meet the Press: A weekly NBC 30 minute panel interview program. The audience is skewed towards the older age demographics (above 45 years of age) like USA and WALL STREET and is close to being equally divided in terms of male and female viewership. The pattern of viewing by geographic region indicates popularity in the South. In terms of "Education", "Occupation", "Political Affiliation" and "Political Philosophy" the viewing characteristics resemble those to 60 MINUTES. Compared to the other four programs it has a significantly high composition percent of Protestants. As noted earlier, the audience is similar to the audience for USA across all demographic categories.

Sixty Minutes: A weekly CBS 60 Minute news magazine program. The program has equal appeal to male and female viewers and shows a broad attraction in terms of audience age demographics. More than one-half of the program's adult audience is between 18 and 44 years of age. Viewing by geographic region and market size is close to the viewing patterns for USA. "Education" and "Occupation" characteristics of the audience follow those for MEET THE PRESS. The program has a higher percentage of high school level educated persons and blue collar workers within its audience than the other four programs.

In summary, the data show that public affairs programs, whether on PTV or the commerical networks, draw audiences of varied characteristics. And, the audience is not limited to highly educated viewers residing in large metropolitan areas. For example, while 50.0% of MACNEIL/LEHRER viewers reside in the top 25 metropolitan areas, these markets account for only 34.4% of the MEET THE PRESS audience. Blue collar workers which comprise 11.5% of the audience for WALL STREET represent 20.0% of USA viewers and 23.9% of the audience to SIXTY MINUTES. Only 33.8% of MEET THE PRESS viewers have a college level or higher education.

Percentages showing detailed audience composition and penetration based on the number of Roper respondents that claimed viewing each program during the previous four weeks are shown on the attachments. The sum of the data reported for each demographic category will not equal the total audience in all cases, because some sub-groups have not been reported and because of "don't know/no answer" type responses.

Questions concerning the Roper Surveys should be directed to the Office of Communication Research. Additional Roper information will be highlighted in future mailings.

AUDIENCE CHARACTERISTICS-ROPER SURVEYS

COMPOSITE COMPOSITION PERCENTAGES

	(2) MacNEIL-LEHRER REPORT	(5) USA: PEOPLE & POLITICS	(2) WALL STREET WEEK	(2) MEET THE PRESS	(4) SIXTY MINUTES
BASE (TOTAL VIEWERS)	(226) 100.0%	(872) 100.0%	(156) 100.0%	(986) 100.0%	(3173) 100.0%
SEX: Male	56.2%	50.1%	66.7%	48.4%	49.2%
Female	43.8	49.9	33.3	51.6	50.8
AGES: 18-29	24.3	19.2	16.0	18.8	27.6
30-44	23.9	18.6	24.4	20.8	22.9
45-59	27.0	27.9	23.7	27.5	25.2
60 +	24.8	34.4	35.9	33.0	24.3
ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME:					
Under $6,000	17.7	19.4	21.8	21.5	15.2
$6,000-11,999	24.3	30.2	24.4	27.0	27.7
$12,000-17,999	25.2	24.8	25.0	26.3	29.4
$18,000 and Over	31.9	24.1	27.6	23.1	25.5
RACE: White	87.2	88.6	87.2	87.0	90.0
Black	11.1	9.4	10.3	11.7	8.6
GEOGRAPHIC AREA:					
Northeast	23.9	21.8	22.4	18.4	20.1
Midwest	33.2	20.9	36.5	27.4	30.3
South	24.3	31.1	22.4	36.9	30.8
West	18.6	20.2	18.6	17.3	18.8
*MARKET SIZE:					
A	50.0	37.7	47.4	34.4	37.7
B	25.7	35.8	25.6	35.4	34.8
C	22.1	22.5	19.2	23.8	23.8
D	2.2	4.0	7.7	6.4	3.7
EDUCATION LEVEL:					
College	50.4	36.5	46.8	33.8	34.1
High School	37.2	46.3	36.5	49.6	53.7
Grade School	11.5	17.0	16.7	16.0	11.6
OCCUPATION:					
Exec/Professional	23.0	14.9	23.1	14.3	12.4
White Collar	12.0	12.6	11.5	12.9	15.7
Blue Collar	19.9	20.0	11.5	20.6	23.9

	(2) MacNEIL LEHRER REPORT	(5) USA: PEOPLE & POLITICS	(2) WALL STREET WEEK	(2) MEET THE PRESS	(4) SIXTY MINUTES
RELIGION:					
Protestant	47.8%	60.1%	57.7%	65.7%	60.2%
Catholic	32.3	27.3	25.6	23.2	27.4
POLITICAL AFFILIATION:					
Democrat	49.1	49.9	39.1	51.3	47.8
Republican	20.4	22.0	32.7	22.2	22.5
Independent	28.8	25.9	22.4	24.0	25.5
POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY:					
Conservative	40.7	42.9	46.2	41.8	40.3
Moderate	24.8	26.1	20.5	30.3	29.2
Liberal	32.3	27.4	31.4	23.9	26.0
UNION MEMBERS:	16.8	15.4	11.5	14.0	14.6
HAVE CHILDREN:					
Age 12 or below	29.7	29.7	21.2	24.7	32.1
Age 13 to 18	16.8	19.6	13.5	19.4	18.9
EMPLOYED FEMALES:	19.5	17.4	4.5	16.3	18.5
TOTAL RESPONDENTS	4004	10,007	4005	4005	8017

The number of Roper surveys on which this composite information is based for each program is shown in parenthesis.

*"A" markets consist of all counties comprising the 25 largest metro areas. "B" markets consist of all counties that have a population of 150,000 or more or form part of a metro area having a population of 150,000 or more. "C" markets are counties having a population of 35,000 or more or form part of a metro area having a population of 35,000 or more. "D" markets are all remaining counties in the country.

AUDIENCE CHARACTERISTICS-ROPER SURVEYS

COMPOSITE PENETRATION PERCENTAGES

		(2) MacNEIL-LEHRER REPORT	(5) USA: PEOPLE & POLITICS	(2) WALL STREET WEEK	(2) MEET THE PRESS	(4) SIXTY MINUTES
BASE (TOTAL RESPONDENTS)		(4004) 100.0%	(10,007) 100.0%	(4005) 100.0%	(4005) 100.0%	(8017) 100.0%
SEX:	Male	6.7%	9.2%	5.5%	25.1%	40.8%
	Female	4.7	8.3	2.5	24.2	38.4
AGES:	18-29	4.6	5.7	2.1	15.8	37.5
	30-44	5.4	6.3	3.5	19.6	34.5
	45-59	6.3	10.1	3.8	28.0	41.5
	60 +	6.6	14.5	7.1	39.4	46.8
ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME:						
	Under $6,000	5.5	9.4	4.1	28.0	32.0
	$6,000-11,999	5.4	9.7	3.4	24.8	38.8
	$12,000-17,999	5.1	7.7	3.7	22.6	41.9
	$18,000 and Over	6.8	8.4	4.8	24.6	44.1
RACE:	White	5.6	8.8	3.8	24.5	40.7
	Black	6.1	7.6	3.8	27.1	30.7
GEOGRAPHIC AREA:						
	Northeast	5.6	7.9	3.6	18.6	33.1
	Midwest	6.9	8.7	5.1	24.7	43.7
	South	4.3	8.5	2.8	28.8	38.6
	West	6.2	13.0	4.3	25.1	43.9
*MARKET SIZE:						
	A	7.1	8.3	4.6	21.6	38.2
	B	4.8	7.9	3.3	27.8	43.3
	C	5.1	8.4	3.2	25.3	40.6
	D	2.3	6.4	4.4	25.2	24.7
EDUCATION LEVEL:						
	College	8.4	9.9	6.0	28.5	45.2
	High School	4.1	7.6	2.6	21.9	38.2
	Grade School	4.6	10.7	4.4	27.3	32.8
OCCUPATION:						
	Exec/Professional	9.2	10.6	7.5	28.8	44.0
	White Collar	4.7	7.3	3.0	21.7	41.1
	Blue Collar	4.4	6.5	1.8	19.7	36.2

	(2) MacNEIL-- LEHRER REPORT	(5) USA: PEOPLE & POLITICS	(2) WALL STREET WEEK	(2) MEET THE PRESS	(4) SIXTY MINUTES
RELIGION:					
Protestant	4.7%	8.8%	3.7%	26.8%	39.3%
Catholic	6.2	8.6	3.7	21.3	40.4
POLITICAL AFFILIATION:					
Democrat	5.9	9.0	3.3	26.6	39.6
Republican	5.1	9.0	5.6	24.8	41.1
Independent	6.1	8.6	3.3	22.6	40.5
POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY:					
Conservative	5.6	9.4	4.6	25.2	39.8
Moderate	4.7	7.5	2.7	24.6	38.3
Liberal	7.7	10.0	4.9	25.3	43.9
UNION MEMBERS:	6.2	8.6	3.1	22.0	38.1
HAVE CHILDREN:					
Age 12 or below	4.7	6.8	2.3	16.7	34.3
Age 13 to 18	4.3	8.0	2.5	21.6	35.4
EMPLOYED FEMALES:	4.9	7.1	0.9	19.8	36.3
TOTAL VIEWERS:	5.6 (226)	8.7 (872)	3.9 (156)	24.6 (986)	39.6 (3173)

The number of Roper surveys on which this composite information is based for each program is shown in parenthesis.

*"A" markets consist of all counties comprising the 25 largest metro areas. "B" markets consist of all counties that have a population of 150,000 or more or form part of a metro area having a population of 150,000 or more. "C" markets are counties having a population of 35,000 or more or form part of a metro area having a population of 35,000 or more. "D" markets are all remaining counties in the country.